

Auch wenn dieser Vortrag von Arny und Amy Mindell bereits aus dem Jahr 2001 stammt, hat er nichts von seiner Aktualität und Tiefe verloren. Arny und Amy sprechen hier über den Umgang mit Konflikten aus Prozessorientierter Sicht und beschreiben ihr Konzept der tiefen Demokratie in Familien, Gruppen und Organisationen. Sie beschreiben und demonstrieren außerdem die prozessorientierte Arbeit mit großen Gruppen (Worldwork) und die nonlokalen Auswirkungen dieser Arbeit.

Dieser Vortrag wurde auf Band aufgenommen und im Anschluss von ihnen beiden (Amy und Arny) in Schriftform gebracht. Eine Bearbeitung erfolgte nur in Ausnahmefällen, um den Stil so lebendig wie im Vortrag zu halten.

Weitere Informationen, Artikel und Interviews gibt es auf der Website von Arny und Amy Mindell unter <http://www.aamindell.net/index.htm> (auch in deutscher Sprache).

World Conflict Theory and Mysticism Lecture

Amy: It's a pleasure and an honour for us to be here today at this conference with so many of you. Should we speak German? *Ich merke dass wir koennten auch Deutsch reden.*

Arny: (Speaking at first in German. Audience claps.) I better not speak German because it comes out sounding like Swiss German and you might not understand ...so... (laughs). In any case, we lived for many years in Switzerland.

Amy: Even though we lived in Switzerland for many years German is still difficult for me, so I'll speak English.

We are happy to share some of our experiences working with groups and conflict situations with our method, we call "Worldwork". We thank everyone for the work you are doing, whether it is your own inner work, working with relationships, or with communities. It takes all of us together, to work together, to make an even better world than we have now. Now, before we begin, for the sake of all of us as a community, even though we are such a large group, please turn to someone you haven't met yet, (audience laughter), and just introduce yourself. This helps make more of a community atmosphere. Just take a couple of minutes for that and then we will go on together.

(Pause while people turn and introduce themselves to one another)

Arny: (Speaking German) Thanks for doing that. Should I go on in German? (Clapping.) Oh...that neglects the English-speaking public. Sensing groups is fifty percent of the solution to world problems. (Laughter)

I also want to welcome people. First I want to welcome our Native American elders. Then I want to welcome gay and lesbian people who are here and not forget to welcome the heterosexual people as well. (Laughter and clapping).

Welcome to people of all races and people of all nations, also people with various financial situations, those who are financially better off, those who have less financial power. Such recognition can be an important part of our work. I just want to suggest openness and to recognize everyone. Even though we are all the same that is we are all made out of stardust we are also very different. Amy, do you want to go on?

Amy: Perhaps I can say something briefly about us personally. We are therapists and conflict resolution facilitators. We lived for many years in Zurich, Switzerland. Together with others, we created a school of process-oriented psychology there in Zurich. A few people here in the audience today were part of that creation. About ten years ago we moved back to the United States where we are from originally. We moved to Oregon on the west coast of the USA, where we developed process work further.

There are many different aspects of our work that I'll speak about after Arny talks. In the moment, let me say we work with individuals and with large groups as well. Today we will mainly focus on what we call Worldwork, the large group aspect of our work. We'll bring some of its theory and philosophy and we'd like to also mention some examples and hopefully some skills if we have time.

In the moment, I would like to share with you something that is on my mind. A few days before coming here, we were working with an international group of people in one of the former concentration camps in Austria. Later in Vienna we meditated and focused on the spirit of the land, the ghosts and the dead that were there. It was a very strong experience and it is still very much inside of me and in my feelings. In Vienna we worked on issues around World War II. It was a very deep and a very moving experience for us. So I am still there somehow. Would you like to say something about it also, Arny, and then we will go further and talk about Worldwork?

Arny: Yes... (Pause), I don't want to jump over all the feelings we have about what happened there. It was a very important experience to work with the dead and listen to them telling us they didn't want us to go on with conflict and revenge but instead wanted us to create a better life for everybody. It was a deep experience.

As Amy mentioned, today we will focus on Worldwork. I define Worldwork as a multicultural, multi-levelled awareness process. It's a way of working with small and large groups of people. The appearance of worldwork depends upon the culture and it depends upon which level of reality we are working at. One level of reality is the everyday diversity situation involved in such conflicts. We focus on local or international conflict, business and organizational problems but also upon the dream level of these events including roles, ghosts and deep feelings. And there is even another level that we call the essence level.

Let me give you an example. Recently, we were helping a Native American group negotiate with their Government about land rights issues. At one point we were involved in a normal legal proceeding. (Arny walks around and says) Please excuse my American behaviour; I have to walk around when I talk.

In any case on one side there were Native Americans and on the other side was the Government. The Government people were speaking, "We want trees, and we need them for business." The Native people responded with, "We need our land, it's sacred to us."

It was a battle. At a given moment, one of the legal specialists said, "Let's take a vote." From the back of the room, a Native American woman raised her hand and quietly informed us all, "I want to say something." But because of the legal procedures, one of the lawyers said, "No, you are out of order, you can't speak now. Now is the time to vote!"

We encouraged the whole group to take a moment and let that woman speak. She not only spoke, she brought in the world of dreams. I can't show what she actually did, but she went into a half trance, moved, danced and spoke. Things came out of her. She said that the Great Spirit spoke through her. She told us what was on her mind and, at the same time showed us by a kind of trance-like dance. It took only a minute or two and afterwards even the government people were very moved. They had been on the side of big business, but now joined her in her arguments. Everyone was touched by what happened and wanted to work together afterwards. It wasn't like they thought they *should* work together; it wasn't a must. They wanted to.

I tell this story to emphasize that Worldwork is a multi-levelled approach where we appreciate negotiations, everyday reality, and also the power of dreaming.

(Jokingly) The story of our work began with the big bang millions of years ago! (Laughter) But for me the history of worldwork began when I was in Switzerland working as a Jungian analyst. Some of my teachers said to me, "Don't do large group work. It's dangerous. You lose your identity, you go unconscious, and you won't be yourself." But I thought that we all are part of large groups, and -- like it or not-- we are a large group. So let's study it.

I am interested in expanding psychology so that it includes large group issues. I understand that many European psychologies have avoided large group issues and stressed individual consciousness. That's extremely important to us as well. But our goal, our hope, is to bring individual consciousness, our centeredness with us not only when we are alone by ourselves but also when we are in the midst of group process. This is no simple undertaking. For me enlightenment means consciousness in the middle of an argument. I can't do it all the time, but I want to. No one should have to do it alone. Together with everyone else we can, and must, learn to keep our awareness. We need to learn how to do this together, alone, in small and large communities.

In the 1970's in Zurich, I began by focusing first on dream and bodywork. I learned that what is happening in your body is also found in your dreams. One of my early discoveries at that time was that your body dreams. I'll give you an example of that. Imagine a large group of people talking about race relations in Chicago. It is a very heated discussion and at a certain moment an African American woman stands up and says, "I have something to say." (Arny's voice changes and sounds as if he has trouble speaking.) And then this woman suddenly can't speak and she starts to cramp up in her throat. She comes forward and says, (Arny's voice changes to a hoarse whisper) "I can't speak," (Arny clears his throat) and she looks in her pocketbook to pull out her medication. We thought correctly that she was having an asthma attack.

So we said to her, "Do use your cortisone? Before you use it, please tell us what your body is experiencing." She said, (Arny's voice changes to a hoarse whisper) "It is like this inside. I'm feeling this." (Arny makes a clenched fist with his hand, expressing the feeling she had in her chest.)

I said, "Well, if you go deeper into that clenched fist, what would it be doing?" She said, "This would express all my feelings about..." and she paused... "about my personal history, about what happened in Chicago for me as an African American woman." And then she began to sing and to talk. Her asthma got better, at least for

that time and place. She didn't use her cortisone. She expressed herself with a clenched fist, which for her meant her passion.

My point is that the body is not sick, it is dreaming. In her case, asthma was a medical term for her passion and expressiveness. Afterwards people voted for her to be the leader of that organization. And she was a good leader.

So there is a lot to say about dream and bodywork. Perhaps Amy will give you an overview of our work and then I'll come back again with Worldwork theory. Are you in agreement with that, Amy?

Amy: Yes! (Laughs and the group laughs) I'd like to give you an idea of the various aspects of our work, since the time of Arny's idea of the Dreambody. The Dreambody implies there is mirror connection between what we dream at night and what we experience in our bodies. Since that time, Process Work developed in many areas and has many different applications. We think that you need a little bit of knowledge in each of these areas to work with large groups or to do worldwork. I'll just name some of those areas, starting with dream and bodywork.

Arny just mentioned working with body symptoms.¹ Another area is movement work, working with people's movement and movement difficulties. My background is in dance and music, so this is an important area to me.

Another aspect of Process Work is working with people in near death and in comatose states. That is an area that I have been researching a lot and writing about.² We just had a very moving experience with my own mother who was in a coma before she died, following her signals. It was a very beautiful experience. Another aspect of our work has to do with relationship work, working with the signal interchange between two people.³ We also work with people in extreme or so-called psychotic states⁴. And of course, we also do small and large group work.

I know all of that sounds like a whole lot but there is an idea that pulls the different areas together. That is the idea of process or nature, the ideas of Taoism. We have found that within the processes happening, whether you are working with somebody with an asthma attack or whether you are working with a large group, if you are working with somebody near death or at the point of death, the process itself has its own wisdom. In other words, within the difficulty itself lies the solution. And our job is to follow and unfold these experiences. That is the idea that brings these areas together. But maybe we can go on more with the Worldwork aspect of things.

Arny: We developed Worldwork by asking ourselves, what's the problem with the world? There is just too much war and too much conflict. We don't accept that. Why haven't we solved this problem? Engineers and physicists developed the possibility to land on the moon. Now there are different kinds of psychologies that can analyze your dreams. Why is there so much conflict? Why is it still going on? Now each of you has your own answer to that and your own ideas.

¹ See *Dreambody* (originally Sigo Press, 1981, now Lao Tse Press, 1998) and *Working with the Dreaming Body* (originally Routledge, 1985, now Lao Tse Press, 2002). (In German, *Dreambody*, Bonz, 1996 and *Der Leib und die Traeume*, Junfermann, 1987).

² See *Amy's Coma, A Healing Journey* (Lao Tse Press, 1999). (In German, *Koma: Ein Weg der Liebe*, Via Nova, 2000).

³ See Arny's *The Dreambody in Relationships* (originally Routledge, 1987, now Lao Tse Press, 2002). (In German, *Traumkoerper in Beziehungen*, Hugendubel, 1994).

⁴ See Arny's *City Shadows* (Routledge, 1988). (In German, *Die Schatten der Stadt*, Junfermann, 1989).

One of our answers is that the concept of democracy is weak. This beautiful thing called democracy is a combination of Greek words "Demo-kratie". "Demo" means citizen and "Kratie" is a Greek word for power. Citizen power means if we debate, either you or I will win. We try to be strong, win at wrestling with one another, competition. That is part of democracy. Democracy aims at equal representation. But no one does this, not inside at least. Most of us are still tyrants when it comes to our inner worlds. There is very little democracy, very little equality. There are very few of us that feel our parts have equal value!

For me, the basic problem with democracy is that it is about power. It is not about awareness. Awareness is a very different kind of paradigm. Awareness has to do with noticing what is happening in yourself, in your interactions, awareness in your signal exchanges, awareness of dreams, awareness of deepest things. So while cultures aim for democracy, we want a deeper democracy in which awareness is central, not just power.

Where do we look if we want teachers for awareness work and democracy? They are very hard to find. There are too few of us using awareness in community work. We are just learning; we are babies in it. Perhaps our first step is to admit that. Admit that you and I don't know. Let's find the way together. So I always look outside for where there is a leader. Where is there a mother, a father that will help me with all of this? Where is the spirit of leadership? I should do a constellation on that surely! (Audience laughs)

Actually we have! (Audience laughter) Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, these are fabulous characters, Martin Luther King. Gandhi's idea was that you have to be the world you'd like to change. Model the changes yourself.

In any case, I ask myself do I create and belong to organizations that model democracy and awareness? We try. When our Portland groups work together, we try to do it. Sometimes we work together as a team with fifty facilitators. Let me tell you, working with fifty facilitators simultaneously itself is not a simple business! Well,... that's the price of democracy.

Very few of us work in organizations that have awareness. So changing the world begins in your organization, in your family, in your group, becoming aware of different realms. We need each other. This kind of awareness is not something you can do only with your individual consciousness; it needs everyone to help.

In any case, we work with the reality of situations and with the dreaming level. Let me give you an example of the third level, the essence level. Once Amy and I were walking on the river in an Australian town where we were doing some conflict work. An Aboriginal elder put his arm around us and he said, "My dear kids, look at the center of the town. What do you see?" And we said, "Ohhh, we see cars, we see smoke, we see smog, we see too much noise." "No, look again" he said. And we looked, and he said, "What do you see?" Again, we said "We see the same thing; the city is noisy as hell! We'd like to go into the green part of the city." And he said, "No, no, no. You white folks have a problem. Use your eyes, your inner eyes". And we looked again and I have to admit, my inner eyes weren't working yet. (Audience laughs)

The Aboriginal Elder said, "Don't you see the dreaming that was there before the economic center of the city was here? That is the place where my people did their business. They sold fish; they did trading, right there. There is a dreaming that comes before the creation of the city."⁵

Contact with the earth requires feeling such "essences", feeling "the dreaming" behind our cities, our earth. And so the Aboriginal peoples have taught us; feel the dreaming. That is where we are friends with all things. That dreaming is the Essence level of a city, of a community. Roles and ghost roles, ancestors and the dead, are usually figures closer to consciousness than the sense of dreaming's power which can't quite be put into words.

Think for example of an organization in which the vice president was a thief. They hired us because the vice president was stealing money from the organization. To make the story short, Amy and I stepped into the center of the group, and made one spot for the thief as a role. Then we got into that role and let it speak.

Amy: This person was no longer in the organization any more, but we made a spot to represent that thief. He then spoke and said everything!

Amy: We went into that role first and said, "I want to steal, and I need something." Soon, others took over that role and said, "I want more, give me something, I'm needy, damn it! Nobody says anything nice to me in this organization!" Someone else said, "Won't somebody be nice?"

That thief role is part of the dreamland of the organization. People realized, "Oh my god, we are all thieves! We want more love from one another. In any case, that *thief* helped the organization to come together. Today it is a great organization and finances improved! (Audience laughs.) And those folks are nicer to one another.

Amy, do you want to mention the possible influence of the field of an organization or group on the city? We don't know for sure about this influence, but can you give us an example?

Amy: Okay, because of time I'll be brief. We had an experience a number of years ago in Oakland, California in the United States. We worked in a part of Oakland that is essentially African American. It was at the time when the Rodney King trial was happening. I don't know if people here in Europe know about that. Said briefly, some white policemen were accused of beating up an African American man and were put on trial. There was a lot of tension and a lot of fear. If these white policemen were acquitted, everyone was afraid that there would be rioting all over the United States, especially in the African American sections of cities.

In any case, we worked in Oakland at that time. We were joined by two of our colleagues about two days before this verdict came out and as you can imagine it was unbelievably tense. You could feel the tension in the air. It was a highly charged situation with about three hundred people and a lot of policemen who were there because they were afraid of what might happen.

⁵ Amy tells more about this story in his *Dreaming While Awake* (Hampton Roads, 1999). (To appear in German from Via Nova, 2003)

To make a long story short, at one point there were two groups in conflict. On one side there was an essentially black, African American group and on the other side an essentially white, European American group. Everyone was angry about the topics we were discussing; racism, privilege, and economics. At a certain point when things were escalating, an African American man from the very back of the room, began to cry. And then bit-by-bit, his cry became louder and louder and soon he began to wail. His sounds were incredible. He expressed the agony and sadness that was present. He expressed all the pain that was behind what everyone was saying. Everyone's feelings were deeply moved by him as he wailed. At first a few people started to turn toward this man and embraced him. Then, one by one, people joined them. The two groups that had been fighting stopped, and everyone eventually turned and circled him. We all started to sob together. It was quite something; it is difficult to describe. It was an incredible moment together. It was a spontaneous group hug. After that we could go further and deeper into our work around racism and listen to one another.

I am telling this story now because when the verdict did come out, the policemen were freed and riots did happen. But Oakland was one of the only essentially African American communities in the United States that didn't riot at all. The newspapers even went there to report on why they didn't riot! A main newspaper even gave credit to that group work for having affected the city, though I don't think this is completely true. But I am bringing this example to say that we don't know the exact effect of large group work, but it seems likely that working with large groups does indeed affect cities and communities, either directly or perhaps even para-psychologically.

Arny, maybe you can go on with some of the goals.

Arny: How do such connections between group work and city life occur? Maybe there were so many people who went out peacefully afterwards that they had an effect on the city. We don't know.

We want to be brief and must stop in about five minutes. I want to just say that the appearance of worldwork depends very much upon the language and the goals of the organization. Some groups work on civil rights issues, others on finances or other organizational development issues. When our Japanese Process Work group does worldwork, it looks completely different. When the Slovaks do it, it looks Slovakian.

In the last minutes, we'd like to act out another example and ask you what you would do, how would you work with a group at that spot.

Imagine the city of Belfast just before the voting on the Peace Accord. The city of Belfast asked us to come and help them with the problems there, with the conflict between different sides that always broke out after springtime marches. However, before we came, the person that hired us was shot. Then the next one in line was blackmailed. So in the last moment our work had to be moved from Belfast to downtown Dublin.

Imagine downtown Dublin. Imagine hundreds of people drawn together in the Samuel Beckett Theatre. There are people from the North. They have just spoken vehemently about their viewpoints. Then people from the South spoke about their viewpoints. At this point, the following situation occurred. Imagine a huge debate

constellating around two people in the center of the room, surrounded by hundreds of others who are all very upset.

Amy: We are going to play out the roles those people were in. But they were not playing. They were real people speaking for themselves and their peoples.

Arny: None of this is a comment about the Irish; it is simply a demonstration of what to do in conflict situation and the kind of deep questions that come up. We love the Irish.

Amy: OK, I am representing a man from the South of Ireland, a Catholic. And Arny is representing a man from the North, who is Protestant. He has a British background and the argument went something like this.

Arny: (Loudly, as the “North” to the “South”) “I can’t stand you!”

Amy: (Even louder, as the South to the North) “I hate you, you have killed so many people in my family in my group.”

Arny: “What are you talking about? I have killed *your* people?”

Amy: “Yes you have!”

Arny: “Just a few days ago in Belfast you came and blew up the tavern I was sitting in. You murdered my grandmother. I could just k....”

Amy: “Who are you to speak? After all, you don’t know what happened in my family. When my father walked out of the door, he was killed in his own yard!”

Arny: (As the North, still furiously) “Well of course he was killed, we wanted to kill him. What do you think? You guys are terrible.”

Amy: (As the South, almost screaming) “You’re horrible.”

Arny: “You’re horrible.”

(Both Amy and Arny continue escalate the tense situation. Then after a few minutes, Amy and Arny abruptly stop playing the North and South so that they can talk to the audience. Arny turns to everyone and speaks.)

Arny: Okay what, dear friends, would you do at this point? It was a pretty hot situation. Take a moment and think about what you would do. Would you have prayed, screamed, cried, meditated, entered into the middle, called the police? Remember there were hundreds of people all yelling at just about the same time.

Amy: What happened was this. Arny stepped toward these men and tried to facilitate.

(Now, Amy and Arny turn away from the audience and go back to play out the situation in Dublin. Except that now, Arny plays the role of the facilitator in that situation, while Amy remains in the role of the South).

Amy: (As one of the facilitators, speaking to the North and the South) “Stop!”

Amy: (As the South) “Are you crazy, you must be totally crazy! *I haven’t talked to someone from the North in twenty-five years.* Let me go on now!”

Amy: (Now, moving from being a facilitator into the position of the North) “Yeah I hate you too!”

Amy: “I hate you, you killed so many people.”

Amy: (Turning towards the audience) We realized that just having a place for these people to meet and speak was solving half the problem. Then things proceeded. The two men in the center were still furious, but the many people standing around them quieted down. The man from the North then said, “I can’t stand you.”

Amy: (As the South) “I can’t stand you”

Together: (Yelling at each other simultaneously) “I hate you!”

Amy: (To the audience) Then Amy and I used our awareness. We saw that the man from the South was holding his neck. And in the midst of the turmoil, we remembered our training and saw him holding his throat, for us that was a crucial body signal. We noticed that his neck was very red and we said to him, “There is a big red mark on your throat.” That is all we said, “There is a red mark on your throat.”

Amy: Whatever happened next was incredible. In that moment, that man from the South just looked at us, and stopped. There was nothing anybody could have said at that point that these men would hear. But the man I was playing stopped completely and said, “Oh I can’t talk about that.”

Amy: (As a facilitator to the man from the South) “Why can’t you talk about that?”

Amy: (As the South) “Well actually I have lethally high blood pressure and my doctor said I shouldn’t get so upset. I could die from it”.

Amy: (As the North) “*You* have high blood pressure? I had three heart attacks in the last month and my doctor told me not to come here today!”

Amy: It was an incredibly poignant moment. Everything froze, it stopped. These two men just stood there, looking at each other. And this is what happened.

(Very slowly, Amy, as the South, walks around to the side of Arny, the North. Arny looks very suspiciously at Amy, but she slowly puts her hand out and then places her arm around Arny’s shoulder. They stand together like that for some time, quietly, both looking shyly toward the floor.)

Amy: (To the audience now) Well they stayed together like that for a while. It was awesome. The nearness to death, we think pulled them together. Noticing and following the red spot on the neck, following body signals brought up the dreaming world, it reminded them of death.

Could we not have seen that earlier? Yes. We could have brought the dead in earlier. However, under those near violent circumstances, in a place where people had not yet talked directly with one another, stopping them from arguing would have been disastrous.

So the dead came in through the body signals. Their work witnessed in the center of all those people changed everyone's feelings. And they stood together, holding one another's hands, while the rest of us worked on discussing our similarities and differences. During two days of further work, they never parted.

Amy: I was so touched. But now we have to finish as we promised. We don't have time to say everything. In our workshop we will discuss some of the skills and the methods using this work as an example. But I will just mention one point.⁶

A core element of our work with large groups is focusing on hot spots, strong emotional moments. We found that if you don't focus on those hot moments, things tend to escalate, sometimes dangerously. The point is, if something really big comes up don't go on. Use your full and total awareness, that's the thing that works. The moment has the solutions. The bodies of the people are wise. We don't know what to do with our heads. But awareness brings up signals that can be followed, which are very helpful. So slow down at hot spots, try to stay awake and follow the moment as best you can.

Arny: In closing, we want to stress that in this last example, we were facilitators. However in our work, and in general, we stress that the facilitator role itself is a role in the field. It is something that is shared by everyone. No one is just a facilitator or a participant, but both.

In the workshop, we will focus on how to do all this in practice. We will focus on the theme of Neo-Fascism, the right wing and diversity issues in today's Germany and Central Europe.

Amy and Arny: Thank you.

⁶ Further details can be found in Arny's *Creating Deep Democracy in Open Forums*, Hampton Roads, 2003.